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ABSTRACT

This guide contains suggestions for building a solid foundation of discipline and responsibility to contribute to positive relationships between parents and children. Three important steps are to: (1) model appropriate behavior; (2) provide age-appropriate choices to help children build decision-making skills and self-esteem; and (3) set reasonable limits. Descriptions of the practices of several families show ways to approach issues of money, monitoring activities with friends, and after-school arrangements. Discussions of consequences of actions versus punishment and anger management offer suggestions to help parents react in ways likely to lead to positive results. (Contains 19 references.) (SLD)

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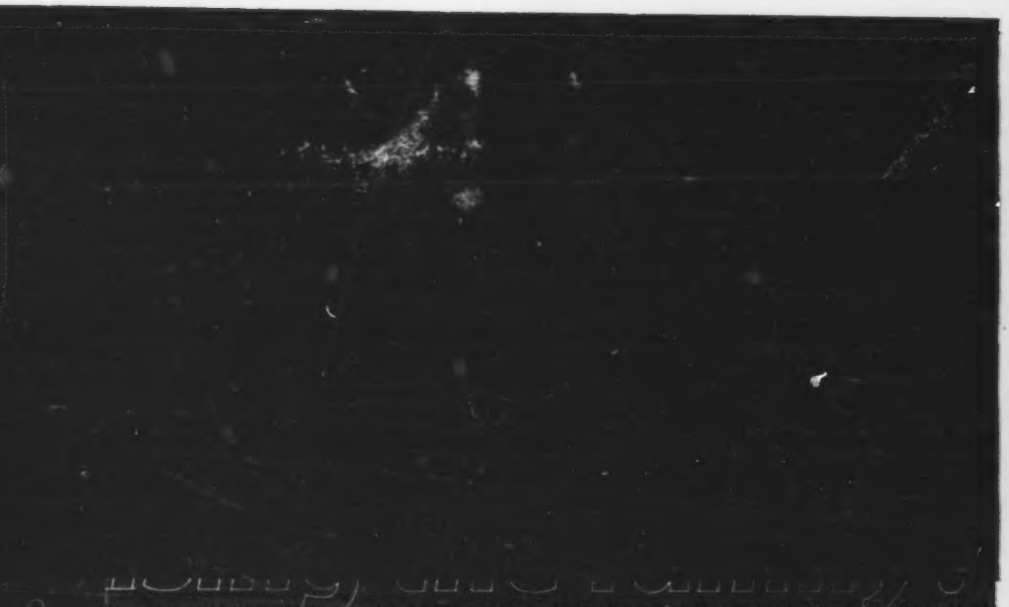

A PARENTING SKILLS SERIES FOR FAMILIES WITH ADOLESCENT CHILDRE

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discipline and responsibility

building solid foundations to prevent and resolve family conflict

EDITED BY

DIANE FRANKLIN AND KAREN BANKSTON

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from "Who's Raising the Family?"
one of a series published by Wisconsin Clearinghouse for Prevention Resources

edited by
Diane Franklin
Karen Bankston

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"Why did the kids put beans in their ears?

No one can hear with beans in their ears.

After a while the reason appears.

They did it 'cause we said no."

LYRICS FROM "NEVER SAY NO,"
FROM THE MUSICAL "THE FANTASTICKS"

Copyright© 1960 (unpub.) & 1963 by Tom Jones and Harvey Schmidt

Conflict between parents and their children may seem as certain as death or taxes.

It begins before your child is out of diapers. You say no, but your toddler is attracted to the forbidden. You set limits, and your 6-year-old feels compelled to test them. You warn, and your child wonders if you mean it.

As children approach adolescence, the potential for conflict grows stronger—and the stakes grow higher. "Parent-child confrontations tend to increase in early adolescence," note Laurence Steinberg and Ann Levine, authors of *You and Your Adolescent*. "Young adolescents often express their need to be independent of their parents through criticism and quarreling, silence and secrecy."

Confrontations between parent and child usually peak somewhere between seventh and ninth grade before declining, the authors note. Conformity to peers follows a similar curve. At ages 11 to 13, peers may seem to have more influence on your child's behavior than you do. You may find your child gradually withdrawing from the family. Suddenly, he is late for evening meals. She may be sullen and uncommunicative when you ask about her day. Although he always did his chores on time before, your son now often claims he "forgot" to clean his room.

Your child's physical appearance may be another source of conflict: hair, manner of dress, a sudden insistence on having such-and-such pierced or this-or-that tattooed. Even parents who two or three decades ago grew their hair long and tie-dyed their T-shirts may find this hard to handle.

A much greater threat is peer pressure to smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol, or experiment with illicit drugs. Alcohol and other drug use is often presented as a way to feel grown up and to revolt against

parental authority. "While disagreements are normal and common in the in-between stage, constant fighting and out-and-out rebellion (running away, using drugs, truancy, delinquency) are not," Steinberg and Levine warn. "Such behavior is a sign that the adolescent is having trouble establishing his independence, and/or that parents are exercising too much or too little control."

How do you safeguard your child from such dangers? Quite simply, you can't. But you can lay the groundwork so your child will be more likely to make the right decision for herself.

Parental involvement has been shown to have a positive effect on the choices that adolescents make. Research in 1997 by the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health found that teenagers who have strong ties to their families were less likely to engage in risky behaviors including substance abuse, early sexual activity, violence, and suicide.

LAYING A FOUNDATION FOR DISCIPLINE AND RESPONSIBILITY

Parents should build a solid foundation of discipline and responsibility to build positive relationships with their children. By taking a few important steps, you may find the conflicts that seem so inevitable between parent and child are fewer and less disruptive.

1. ***Model appropriate behavior.*** "Do as I say, not as I do" is a sure prescription for failure. If you expect a child to keep his word, you must keep yours. If you expect your child to treat people with respect, make sure she sees you treating people with respect.

   Adults may drink alcohol occasionally without condoning underage drinking. The key is to drink only in moderation, never to drink before driving, and not to force alcoholic drinks on guests at family and social events in your home. The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health found that children whose parents keep alcohol, tobacco, or illegal drugs in the home were more likely to use those substances. Access and parental examples seem to be factors in the occurrence of risky behavior.

2. ***Provide age-appropriate choices to help your child build decision-making skills and self-esteem.*** Adolescents may chafe under parental authority when every decision is made for them. They're likely to feel more valued if they can select between two or more options. For instance, you might say: "Which would you rather do today, clean out the garage or rake the leaves?" Your son understands he must help with chores, but he still has input.

3. ***Set reasonable limits.*** A child accustomed to reasonable limits consistently and fairly enforced will be more likely to set reasonable standards of behavior for herself as she moves toward adulthood. From the discipline you set for her as a child, she will learn self-discipline to carry her forward for life.

DEFINING RESPONSIBILITY

How do you view your role as a parent? Do you see yourself as your child's protector, someone who keeps her safe from the outside world? Are you the enforcer, with a strict set of rules that must be obeyed at all times? Or do you see yourself as a teacher, who slowly but surely guides your child through life's lessons until he becomes an independent, self-reliant human being?

The teaching approach certainly nets results. Some parents find it hard to encourage their children to be independent. It's natural to want to protect your child from harsh realities, especially when he seems vulnerable to so many potentially negative influences. As your child's most important teacher, you can gradually increase his independence and responsibilities as he proves himself ready to handle them. This expands his sense of self-worth and prepares him for life.

"Children with high self-esteem are those who are given the opportunity to be decision-makers right from the very beginning of their lives," suggests Wayne W. Dyer in his book, *What Do You Really Want for Your Children?* He continues:

"Children need to take on responsibilities, rather than have their parents do things for them. They learn confidence by doing, not by watching someone else do for them. They need to feel important, to take risks, to try new adventures, and to know that you trust them, not so much to do something without error as to simply go out and give it an effort."

Even 3-year-olds can be responsible for putting away their toys or washing their hands before dinner. As your child grows and matures, additional responsibilities should be added as a natural progression.

Chores are an important aspect of learning responsibility. The child who empties the trash, mows the lawn, or does the dishes learns an important lesson: *We, as a family, are all in this together. Mom has her responsibilities, Dad has his, and I have mine.*

Who does what varies from family to family. Consider the number of adults and children in your family. How much time do adults spend at work, school, and other activities? How much time can kids spare beyond homework and extracurricular activities? Do family members have preferences about chores? Letting preteens and teenagers choose some of the chores they would like to do will gain better cooperation. For chores no one wants to do, one solution might be to take turns.

"We have this ideal notion that we're going to have a family meetings on some Sundays," Allen relates. "They haven't been as regular as we'd planned, but the ones we've had have been helpful." At one meeting, parents and children discussed sharing family chores, and 12-year-old Jon followed up by devising his own work schedule on the family computer. The chores he volunteered for ranged from walking and feeding the dog to vacuuming and helping with the laundry.

"Sometimes that schedule doesn't always work out, but there are certain baseline things we want Jon to do to help around the house," Allen explains. "And he just needs to be available when

from experience...

DOUG AND SANDY HAVE DISCUSSED FAMILY RULES WITH THEIR CHILDREN SINCE THEIR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DAYS, WITH A FOCUS ON HOW THOSE RULES REFLECT FAMILY BELIEFS AND VALUES. DOUG NOTES: "I'M A FIRM BELIEVER THAT KIDS LEARN AS MUCH WATCHING WHAT WE DO AS IN LISTENING TO WHAT WE SAY."

Doug and Sandy have discussed family rules with their children since their elementary school days, with a focus on how those rules reflect family beliefs and values. Doug notes: "I'm a firm believer that kids learn as much watching what we do as in listening to what we say."

He recalls a summer afternoon building a deck when he looked up to see his son volunteering to help. "He had on a leather tool belt just like mine. He started spacing the planks on the deck, using 16 penny nails just like I did and I didn't even have to tell him how," Doug says. "I had this incredible sense that he's doing this just because he'd watched me do the same thing."

Doug and Sandy have always negotiated family rules at the beginning of each school year. "We'd start by asking them what they thought was fair, and invariably they'd come up with stricter guidelines than we had in mind," Doug says. "This year, we asked Joel about his weekend curfew and he said 12:30. We'd been thinking it would be all right if he came home at 1 a.m. one night a week."

The same goes for the consequences of violating a family rule. "We'd ask them what consequences they should have, and their suggestion was usually stricter than what we would have come up with."

other things need to be done and pitch in without complaining." Jon's allowance is not tied to completion of his chores, but permission for privileges like sleepovers and trips to the mall are. Once his jobs are completed, his parents are more willing to consider those types of outings.

Assigning tasks need not be decided by gender. There's no reason your 13-year-old daughter can't mow the lawn while your 10-year-old son loads the dishwasher.

WHAT ABOUT MONEY?

Most family experts agree that routine household chores should not be connected to a monetary reward. After all, Dad doesn't get paid for cooking Sunday dinner. Mom doesn't pull down a bundle for painting the kitchen. Why should children be paid for filling the dishwasher or cleaning their rooms?

"Bribing your children to do chores can also get you into a bind," asserts Barbara Coloroso in her book, *Kids Are Worth It! Giving Your Child the Gift of Inner Discipline.* "When you say, 'I'll give you a dollar for taking out the trash,' your eleven-year-old may respond, 'I already have enough money to go to the movies. Grandma gave me ten dollars.' Now what are you going to do? Bribes don't work once a child can get the reward from sources other than the parent."

At the same time, allowances are recommended as a good way to teach children how to save and spend wisely. Financial responsibility is a major lesson on the road to independence. Parents can take care of the basics in their children's lives (food, clothing, shelter, household necessities, school supplies and even some extras like family outings and vacations). Children use their allowances for the things they want to buy (from designer jeans and expensive sports shoes to a CD or Saturday movie).

Some parents pay children for doing "something extra" around the house. For instance, Mary Jo and Mike give their three older children the option to earn extra cash on special jobs like

mowing the lawn. "One of my sons saved for a long time to buy a BB gun he really wanted," Mary Jo reports.

You may want to set some guidelines about what your child can and can't do with her own money, but family specialists warn against being too rigid. "Parents who try to dictate how their children handle their own money often find that those children spend recklessly as a way to rebel and to assert their independence," states Lawrence Kutner, author of *Making Sense of Your Teenager.*

Adolescents often find ways to earn money outside their homes by mowing lawns, shoveling snow, baby-sitting for neighbors, even taking on a part-time or summer job. Some parents may be uncomfortable about teenagers holding part-time jobs during the school year. Schoolwork and extracurricular activities provide plenty of obligations already, they contend.

Debra and Peder fall into this camp. Their 18-year-old daughter, Kerrie, has given piano lessons and baby-sat neighborhood children. Their 14-year-old son, Kyle, also earns extra cash by baby-sitting. But Debra notes, "We don't believe in regular hours for a full or part-time job while in high school. We believe children need to feel rested and ready to cope with life."

Another couple, Del and Steve share a similar view. Though they allow 16-year-old Alex to take on summer jobs and occasional odd jobs, Del notes that during the school year, "we've told our son that school is his job."

When Alex was in the seventh grade, Del and Steve opened a checking account for him. Each month, they deposit a specific amount into Alex's account to last until the end of the month. At first, Del feared Alex might go overboard writing checks as if they were paper, but she's been pleasantly surprised at his financial responsibility. Now, the couple is thinking about getting Alex a credit card in his junior year of high school so he can learn to use "plastic" wisely.

Jennifer and Joel have held summer jobs and worked at odd jobs during the school year to earn spending money. In Joel's senior year, he got a car and was concerned about earning money for upkeep and gas, but parents Sandy and Doug were concerned that school, homework, sports and other extracurricular activities would keep him busy enough. They made a deal with Joel that they would give him spending money on an as-needed basis so he wouldn't have to get an after-school or weekend job and could concentrate on academics, sports and other "positive things in his life."

He never asked for exorbitant amounts of cash, and now that football and basketball season are over, Joel has enough spare time that he's thinking about looking for an after-school job, Doug says. "The key is talking about these kinds of things and working out ideas in advance," he adds.

If your teenager earns a paycheck, you'll need to consider the issues that additional cash may create. Kutner warns, "For some teenagers, the sudden influx of money from a job gives them a distorted sense of personal economics. This misperception can have disastrous results once they can no longer count on their parents for room and board."

To head off this sort of problem, he suggests, "Long before a child begins to work, the family should discuss that child's plans for spending and saving earnings. This is also a good time to discuss the family budget, and whether a child will be expected to contribute toward living expenses or schooling."

MONITORING ACTIVITIES WITH FRIENDS

As we noted earlier, peers become increasingly important as children reach their preteen years. In most cases, preteens have a social network of friends through school, sporting activities, and other recreational pursuits. As an involved parent, you'll want to get to know your child's friends. In most cases, that knowledge will provide a certain comfort level that these young

people who suddenly have so much influence with your child will not turn her into a rebellious, parent-hating stranger.

It's also helpful to get to know the parents of your child's friends. These connections can help:

- Establish consistent standards: "I was thinking of letting Sam stay at the dance until nine. What about your son, Mike?"
- Confirm transportation arrangements: "If you can pick the kids up from the movies, I'll be happy to drop them off."
- Compare notes: "Jane tells me the allowance we give her is way out of touch with reality. Do you mind if I ask how much you give Lauren?"

Though your child is spending more time with friends and less time with you, your responsibilities as a parent are even more crucial. You need to know where your child will be, whom he will be with, what he will be doing, and what time he will be home. You should confirm that your child has adult supervision whether she is at a friend's home, a school function, or a party.

Last spring, Jon was invited to accompany a friend on her family's five-day vacation. The family was even willing to pay for his plane fare and lodging, but parents Allen and Steven were uncomfortable about Jon being away for five days and missing school and another friend's bat mitzvah.

"In my mind, I couldn't see it happening, but we were willing to hear Jon out and talk with his friend's parents about it," Allen says. "In the end, we told Jon "no," but almost reconsidered when he first begged us to change our minds and then complained that they weren't being fair. Finally, he went to bed, mad at us because we were being so unreasonable," Allen recalls.

"Steve and I talked about it then. 'Are we being too strict about this? Should we let him go?' Finally, we decided, this doesn't make sense, so we left it at that."

The next morning on the way to school, Jon told his dad, "Sorry, I was acting like a jerk about the trip. It's fine." Allen concludes, "That was just another reinforcement for us to stick with our gut feeling once we'd talked something through and made a decision. Drawing those limits and being consistent is very important."

Remember Del and Steve? They make clear to their children that they cannot go to a friend's house or have friends over to their own home when no adults are present. This proved to be frustrating in their small town, which has no cafe or other public place for teenagers to congregate before football games and other school events. The parents got together to sponsor fall potluck dinners for football players, cheerleaders and their fans before games. This was a win-win situation for everyone, Del reports. Not only did the teenagers get a good meal and a place to socialize under adult supervision, but the parents had a bit of fun as well.

Parental supervision also has been a key issue for Deb and Toby in raising their daughters, Lyra and Britta, now 18 and 21 respectively. From the girls' elementary school years onward, Deb has been in contact with the parents of their friends. If she had never met the parents before, she'd call and introduce herself and try to arrange a face-to-face meeting. Her daughters became used to this parental involvement in their lives. "It was just standard routine to ask the who, what, when, where, and were the parents going to be home," Deb explains. "It was a solid rule: no parents, no go. After awhile, I did not even have to ask the questions. They would provide everything before I had a chance, or they would not bother to ask if they knew parents were not going to be there."

Deb and Toby's diligence proved a valuable safeguard on a number of occasions. In one case, a 14-year-old girl invited Brita and other friends to a sleepover birthday party at a motel with a pool.

"I discovered that the mother was going to let the girls sleep at the motel unsupervised," Deb recalls. "We all got on the phone with each other and then let the birthday girl's parents know our daughters could not attend an unsupervised party. The mother ended up staying over with the girls. We let Brita go to the party during the evening but not overnight."

AFTER-SCHOOL ARRANGEMENTS

Supervision is also an important issue on weekdays after school. Parents worry, sometimes with good reason, that preteens and teenagers left to their own devices in these after-school hours will find themselves in trouble — or that trouble will find them.

Evidence about the effects of this unsupervised time is contradictory. A 1989 study by the University of Southern California in Los Angeles indicated that adolescents left unsupervised after school were more likely to use alcohol, cigarettes, or marijuana than those who had adult supervision. However, the study also suggested that parents who phone home regularly reduce the chances that their children will experiment with alcohol and other drugs. The study focused on eighth-graders in the Los Angeles and San Diego areas.

A 1986 study by the University of Wisconsin-Madison and University of Texas at Dallas concluded that latchkey children are on a social and emotional par with youngsters who receive adult supervision in the post-school hours. That study targeted third-, fourth- and fifth-graders, mainly in large cities and nearly half from low-income households.

Steinberg and Levine suggest a sense that parents are "there" for them psychologically, if not physically, tempers ill effects of the so-called "latchkey syndrome." "Returning to an empty house after school has no ill effects on emotional, social, or academic adjustment if the child knows his parents care about where he is and what he is doing," they write. "The latchkey children who do tend to get in trouble are those who are allowed to wander freely after

school and feel that no one cares. Studies show that these youngsters are more likely to experiment with sex, drugs, and alcohol, especially during after-school hours."

Parents who work outside the home should agree on an after-school plan for young adolescents. Steinberg and Levine recommend that preteens on their own for an hour or two after school should:

- go directly home from school or to an adult-supervised activity
- check in by phone with a parent or other adult every day
- know what to do in an emergency
- have a plan for afternoon activities

"You and the adolescent should agree on an after-school schedule," they suggest. "The agenda might be homework, household chores, hobbies or simply watching TV. What he plans doesn't matter so much as the fact that he has a plan. Young adolescents are most likely to get into trouble or to feel lonely, when they are looking for something to do."

Make your expectations clear. If you mean "head straight home," say so plainly. If you mean "absolutely no friends in the house when Mom and Dad are not there," stick with it. If you are consistent, precise, and firm, your child will know what you expect. And if your expectations are not met, then your child should know up-front what the consequences will be.

DEFINING AND INSTILLING DISCIPLINE

Perhaps no word in the vocabulary of parenting is more misunderstood than discipline. Many equate the word with "punishment," but discipline is more closely related to teaching. Discipline is a means for parents to guide their children from unruly, socially unacceptable actions to behavior that is appropriate and well intentioned.

from experience...

PULLING DOUBLE WORK SHIFTS TO SUPPORT HER FAMILY MEANS THAT SINGLE MOTHER BRENDA OFTEN DOESN'T SEE HER SIX CHILDREN ALL TOGETHER DURING THE SCHOOL WEEK.

The teenagers are often up and out the door before she and the younger children are awake in the morning, and the youngest siblings are typically asleep when she gets home some evenings.

But whenever they are all together, "we take time to talk," Brenda notes. "We laugh and joke a lot and have a good time."

Her busy work schedule leaves little time for house cleaning and cooking, so Brenda divides up those household responsibilities among her six children, ages 16 to 6. "I tell them that I don't dirty the house, so I don't clean it," she explains.

To ensure her children's safety while she is at work, Brenda makes and enforces strict rules about where they can go, when they must be home, and which friends are allowed in the house when no adults are present. For instance, on school nights, Brenda's rule is that everyone must be home by 7:30 p.m. Every once in a while, she takes off early to spend a little extra time with her children — and to make sure the rules are being followed.

"I need to know where they are at all times," she insists. When her children have questions when Mom is not at home, they can stop by the restaurant where she works near their home.

The Smith siblings stay busy with after-school, community and summer school programs. Brenda applauds those youth programs for the lessons they teach about preventing alcohol and other drug abuse and violence and for keeping her children interested and involved.

Brenda says she can see first-hand the effects those programs are having on the community in which her family lives. "There are a lot of kids around, but everyone gets along," she says. "Our neighborhood is so peaceful and quiet that it's sometimes even boring to my kids in the summer."

Lawrence Balter succinctly describes the purpose of discipline in his book, *Who's in Control? Dr. Balter's Guide to Discipline Without Combat:*

> "To understand what is meant by discipline, I like to look at the Latin root of the word: discipulus, or disciple. That word best expresses the ideal relationship of child to parent. A parent acts as a teacher and model, helping his child to develop self-control, character, orderly conduct, a sense of values, good judgment, empathy for human beings and other creatures and, most important, self-discipline. These are a parent's long-term goals, and it is important to bear them in mind continuously throughout the different stages of a child's development. By focusing on the long-term goals, parents will then have a philosophy on which to base their day-to-day discipline decisions. This philosophy will also help parents be consistent in dealing with their children."

Certainly, discipline must evolve as the child grows older. What do you do when your 10-year-old repeatedly fails to complete his homework? Or when your 13-year-old comes home an hour late from her friend's house the third time in a month?

Many family specialists talk about the importance of letting children experience the natural or logical consequences of their actions. Natural consequences are of the "you have no one to blame but yourself" variety. If you fail to put gas in your car, it eventually stops running. If you leave home without an umbrella despite a soggy forecast, you're liable to get caught in a downpour.

Children, too, face natural consequences. If they don't do their homework, they might fail a class. If they fail a class, they might have to take summer school. You could nag your child to finish homework (or, worst yet, get caught up in doing it yourself. However, if you let natural consequences do their job, then he must do the homework or face those consequences. If the prospect of summer school or repeating a grade is dismal, homework may suddenly become preferable.

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Logical consequences, unlike natural consequences, are imposed by an authority figure but still stem directly from the behavior at hand. Take the case of the tardy 13-year-old. Since her late return is a repeat offense, a logical consequence might be grounding for a weekend. And, after the visits resume, she must return home an hour earlier than usual until she has reestablished her reliability. These related consequences are more likely to be accepted than an arbitrary punishment that bears no relationship to the misdeed.

CONSEQUENCES VERSUS PUNISHMENT

Where does "traditional" punishment come in? Some parents may believe only double-duty on chores, long-term grounding, or corporal punishment can be effective. However, many experts note that punishment isn't nearly as effective as letting your child experience consequences — much as they will in life.

"As adults we don't get grounded when we mess up in life; nobody washes our mouths out with soap when we swear," state Foster Cline and Jim Fay, authors of *Parenting With Love and Logic*. "The real world operates on consequences. If we do a consistently lousy job at work, our boss doesn't take away our VCR. He fires us."

Punishment may not teach your child the error of her ways; it may just make her angry with you. She's likely to cast herself as the victim burdened by actions she deems unfair. In some cases, punishment doesn't act so much as a deterrent, but as a catalyst not to get caught next time.

Jane Nelsen, author of *Positive Discipline,* notes that the long-range results of punishment can be summed up by the "Four Rs": Resentment, Revenge, Rebellion or Retreat. "Children do not develop positive characteristics based on these feelings," she writes. "Where did we ever get the crazy idea that in order to make children do better, first we have to make them feel worse? Think of the last time you felt humiliated or treated unfairly. Did you feel like cooperating or doing better?"

Natural and logical consequences carry none of this baggage. Your child can't very well argue with such consequences because they are the direct result of his actions. There is nothing permissive about using consequences instead of "stricter" punishments. By using consequences, you teach your child the very real lesson: unacceptable behavior yields negative results. In the future, he is more likely to regulate his behavior to avoid a recurrence of unpleasant consequences.

You might consider working out logical consequences for misbehavior ahead of time with input from your child. For instance, you might ask your daughter what she considers a reasonable consequence for breaking curfew. She may suggest coming in an hour earlier than regular curfew for two weeks. Since she came up with the idea, your daughter may have extra motivation not to violate the rule and suffer her own consequence. You may discover that your child will come up with more severe consequences than you might have suggested.

As Dyer writes, "Children need guidelines, and even some prohibitions at earlier ages, but always with a sensible explanation — and most urgently, always with the notion that they, not you, must adopt their own discipline regarding virtually everything they do. You cannot supervise them every moment. You cannot watch them at all times. It is how they think and what they do when they are away from you that determines the level of discipline they have adopted, not what they do when they are being scrutinized and supervised."

EXERCISE

As you discipline your child, look for ways to use natural or logical consequences. Consider these hypothetical situations and your possible reactions:

- Your 11-year-old just received a new handheld video game for his birthday and was up until midnight playing with it, despite your insistence that he go to bed. This morning, he slept through his alarm and missed his bus. He comes sidling up to you in the kitchen to ask for a ride to school.

- Your 13-year-old and 11-year-old are arguing in the backseat as you drive them to the mall. You consider turning the car around, but you really need to buy them shoes. The final warning to calm down has fallen on deaf ears.

- It's your 12-year-old daughter's turn to do the dishes tonight, which she promised to do as soon as her "favorite show" was over. Now, it's 8:30 and she's on the phone with her friend.

- You caution your 12- and 14-year-old sons to quit roughhousing in the living room. Instead of stopping, the 12-year-old throws his full weight against his big brother. They both go down, jarring the end table and shattering an expensive vase in the process.

Can you think of a unique disciplinary situation in your household and how natural or logical consequences might be implemented?

ANGER MANAGEMENT

Any parent will admit that raising a child has its exasperating moments. It's not uncommon, and in some cases, not unwarranted, that a parent might feel angry over a child's misbehavior. Even so, it's important to keep anger out of discipline.

In *When Anger Hurts: Quieting the Storm Within,* Matthew McKay and others write that anger's effect on children can be devastating. "Each child learns to see himself as he is seen by his parents," the authors report. "Children who are frequently insulted, put down, or threatened tend to see themselves as mean, selfish, stupid, worthless. They are also more tolerant of abusive behavior from others and more susceptible to peer pressure"(traits more likely to make young people turn to alcohol and other drugs.

McKay and his colleagues report that many parents only begin to formulate discipline when they are already angry, which causes them to make rash, extreme, and inappropriate decisions. "The next step is some shouted punishment that may alienate your child and actually make him more likely to misbehave in the future," they write.

Anger also is more likely to cause a parent to use threats and violence. The authors stress that physical punishment is not only dangerous and devastating to children but does not work. "Corporal punishment may even prevent the development of internal controls," they stress. "The child may feel that it is okay to misbehave if he is willing to take the consequences (being hit). Children who are not physically punished must first understand why their behavior is wrong and then renounce it."

None of this implies you shouldn't express to your child that you are disappointed in misbehavior. Parental approval is important to children, even adolescents, and letting your child know you are upset can in itself be a consequence with a deterring effect in the future.

"Remember that there is an imbalance of power in your relationship with your child," state McKay and his colleagues. "You are much stronger, and you are more articulate. You make the rules, you control the resources, and you are in charge. You have the power to impose any punishment or restriction you want, and the child has no direct recourse. This imbalance of power makes it all the more important that punishments be implemented without a lot of anger."

The Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP) gives the following advice to parents with teens:

- Be aware of how you usually respond to conflict. Do you avoid it? Fly off the handle? Take charge? Negotiate? If you find yourself relying on the same methods for handling conflict, try to expand your peacemaking skills.

- Know your "anger triggers": the words, behaviors, or attitudes that set you off. Knowing your anger triggers can help you manage your feelings during conflicts. Young people need to see that people can be angry without being abusive or out of control.
- Get the Listening Habit: Try saying, "I'll listen to you, if you'll listen to me." Then listen to your child without interrupting. Paraphrase what they say to be sure you've got it right. When it's your turn, give your point of view. If your child interrupts, give the gentle reminder: "We agreed to listen to each other."
- Acknowledge your child's feelings. Young people can't always get what they want when they are in conflicts, but they can have their feelings recognized. Let your child know that his or her feelings are important, whatever the outcome of the conflict.
- Learn the difference between "Demands" and "ReallyNeeds." Demands are what people in conflict say that they want. ("I want to go to this party.") ReallyNeeds are the needs underneath the demand ("I want to feel like part of the group.") Think about what your ReallyNeeds are and help your child identify his or hers. There are often many ways to meet ReallyNeeds.
- Avoid making personal attacks ("You're so slow") or global statements ("You never get ready on time"). Such statements will make the conflict worse. Instead, give your own perspective by starting your statements with "I," such as "I'm frustrated when you aren't ready on time because it makes us late."
- Look at the conflict as a problem to be solved instead of a contest to be won. Involve young people in the solution. Say: "Here's the problem as I see it. How do you see it? What are we going to do about it?"

WHERE TO TURN

If you find yourself losing control with your child, don't hesitate to seek counseling from a qualified family therapist. If anger is a problem for you or any family member, therapy can be the right approach to get your family back on the right track.

If you'd like to learn more about teaching responsibility and providing discipline to your child, the resources below provide lots of helpful information. Also try your local schools, churches/synagogues and mediation centers. They may have special programs for learning conflict resolution skills.

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